

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 SANA 03177 140602Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
SS-15 USIA-06 EUR-12 OMB-01 TRSE-00 SSM-03 ACDA-07
/090 W

-----030238 140612Z /14

R 140515Z AUG 77
FM AMEMBASSY SANA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2093
INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY MANAMA
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
AMEMBASSY MUSCAT
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

S E C R E T SANA 3177

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, YE, YS
SUBJECT: SOUTH YEMENI PRESIDENT VISITS SANA

SUMMARY: SOUTH YEMENI PRESIDENT MAKES SUDDEN AND FIRST EVER
STATE VISIT TO SANA AT SAME TIME RIGHTIST SHAYKH ABDALLAH
BIN HUSSAIN GOES TO SAUDI ARABIA FOR VISIT.

1. DIPLOMATIC CORPS WAS HASTILY SUMMONED TO AIRPORT MORNING
OF AUGUST 13 TO WELCOME PDRY PRESIDENT SALIM RUBAYYA ALLI
ON FIRST EVER STATE VISIT TO YAR. TO JUDGE FROM SHRUGS AND
SURPRISED COMMENTS OF GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AND DIPLOMATICS
AT AIRPORT, TRIP WAS ARRANGED ONLY YESTERDAY AT REQUEST OF
SOUTH YEMEN. ALTHOUGH SOVIET CHARGE WAS ALONE IN APPEARING
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TO KNOW--THOUGH NOT SAYING--WHAT WAS PURPOSE OF TRIP.
HE SAID SIMPLY THAT COMMUNIQUE ISSUED AFTER HAMDI-ALI
MEETING IN AL-BAYDA IN SPRING THIS YEAR CALLED FOR
TWICE-YEARLY EXCHANGE OF VISITS BY THE PRESIDENTS.

2. RECEPTION AT AIRPORT WAS BIGGEST I HAVE EVER SEEN
WITH SOME PEOPLE TRUCKED IN TO PROVIDE A CHEERING

SECTION FROM THE TERMINAL ROOF. THERE WERE TWO CHEERS, AND THEN CROWD OF THOUSANDS FELL SILENT THROUGHOUT REST OF RECEPTION FORMALITIES.

3. VIRTUALLY THE ENTIRE GOVERNMENT WAS PRESENT WITH THE EXCEPTION OF FOREIGN MINISTER ABDALLAH AL-ASNAJ, FORMER ARCH RIVAL OF ALI IN 1966-1968 CONTEST FOR POWER IN THE SOUTH. ASNAJ IS, OF COURSE, OUT OF THE COUNTRY BUT HIS ADENI CHOHOOT YAR MIN/DEVELOPMENT MOHAMMAD SALIM BASINDWA WAS IN THE RECEIVING LINE, WINCING SLIGHTLY AS HE SHOOK HAND OF HIS FORMER FOE ALI.

4. WHILE WAITING IN RECEPTION LINE, SAUDI MILITARY ATTACHE--WHO SEEMED AS SURPRISED AS REST OF US AT VISIT--TOLD ME ABRUPTLY THAT RIGHTIST SHAYKH ABDULLAH BIN HUSSAIN AL-AHMAR HAD LEFT YEMEN LAST WEDNESDAY BY OVERLAND ROUTE NORTH, ENTERING KINGDOM OF NAJLAN. YARG HAS LONG SOUGHT ABDULLAH DEPARTURE--BUT THROUGH SANA NOT NAJLAN. SAUDI MILLATTACHE DID NOT KNOW WHEN ABDULLAH BIN HUSSAIN EXPECTED TO RETURN BUT DISCOURAGED SPECULATION ON MY PART THAT HE MIGHT REMAIN AWAY FOR SOME TIME. HE SAID ABDALLAH HAD GONE TO SAUDI ARABIA FOR TALKS TO "SEE WHERE HE STOOD." HE ALSO SAID THAT UNTIL SUDDEN ARRIVAL OF SALIM RUBAYYA ALI, YARG EXPECTED SINAN ABU LUHUM TO PAY VISIT TO SANA, THUS LEAVING HIS TRIBAL AREA OF NAHMAM FOR FIRST TIME IN MONTHS.

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5. COMMENT: DURING SALIM RUBAYYA ALI'S VISIT TO SANA, WHICH IS EXPECTED TO LAST "SEVERAL DAY," WE MAY COME UP WITH BETTER REASON FOR MOTIVATION OF HIS VISIT, BUT AT THE MOMENT WE THINK IT IS SOME WAY CONNECTED WITH EFFORTS OF SOVIETS TO BRING ABOUT MEDIATION AND SETTLEMENT OF FIGHTING BETWEEN SOMALIA AND ETHIOPIA ON ONE HAND, AND ETHIOPIA AND ERITREA ON THE SECOND FRONT. ARAB MODERATES LIKE YEMEN HAVE ALSO SUPPORTED EDU ON THIRD ETHIOPIAN FRONT. I DOUBT SALIM WILL GET FAR IN THIS EFFORT. YEMENIS TAKE CREDIT FOR SOMALIA'S WILLINGNESS TO ATTACK ETHIOPIA. "YOU SHOULD THANK US," ASNAJ TOLD ME ON AUGUST 4, "WE ENCOURAGED SOMALIA TO ATTACK ETHIOPIA AND ENCOURAGED SAUDIS TO SUPPORT THEM." YAR HAS ALSO BEEN ACTIVE IN TRYING TO RESTRAIN PDRY FROM SHIPPING WEAPONS TO ETHIOPIA. YEMENIS DON'T WANT BLACK, CHRISTIAN-LED NATION OF 26 MILLION PEOPLE WITH ISRAELI TIES ON OTHER SIDE OF RED SEA. THEY SEE DISINTEGRATION OF ETHIOPIA (ESPECIALLY ALONG RED SEA LITTORAL) AS END TO NON-YEMENI CLAIMS TO RED SEA ISLANDS. DEPARTURE OF ABDALLAH BIN HUSSAIN IS UNRELATED DEVELOPMENT WHICH MAY HAVE GROWN OUT OF YEMENI INSISTENCE THAT SAUDIS HELP THEM SOFTEN OPPOSITION OF ABDALLAH BIN HUSSAIN TO CENTRAL

GOVERNMENT.
RANSOM

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Disposition Approved on Date:
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